

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 031 531

UD 007 792

By-Smith, Harold T.

Role of the Elementary Grades in Developing the Potentials of Disadvantaged Children, Kalamazoo County, Michigan.

Upjohn (W.E.) Inst. for Employment Research, Kalamazoo, Mich.

Pub Date Jul 66

Note-27p.

Available from-W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1101 Seventeenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

EDRS Price MF-\$0.25 HC-\$1.45

Descriptors-*Educationally Disadvantaged, *Educational Programs, *Elementary Grades, Flexible Progression, Kindergarten, Pilot Projects, *Preschool Education, Reading Programs, Remedial Programs, Special Services

Identifiers-Kalamazoo County, Michigan, Project Headstart

This report deals with preschool, kindergarten, and elementary grade efforts for disadvantaged children in Kalamazoo County, Michigan in 1966. The findings, based primarily on conferences with elementary school personnel, are presented under the headings of continuous growth concept, preventive and remedial programs, staff specialists and special services, and such pilot programs as Headstart and community schools. (NH)

ED031531

ROLE OF THE ELEMENTARY GRADES IN DEVELOPING
THE POTENTIALS OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN
KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE
PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION
POSITION OR POLICY.

By

Harold T. Smith

July 1966

The W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
300 South Westnedge Avenue
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

UD 007 792

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE
W. E. UPJOHN UNEMPLOYMENT TRUSTEE CORPORATION

Harry E. Turbeville, Chairman
Lawrence N. Upjohn, M.D., Honorary Chairman
E. Gifford Upjohn, M.D., Vice Chairman
Donald S. Gilmore, Vice Chairman
D. Gordon Knapp, Secretary-Treasurer
Mrs. Genevieve U. Gilmore
Arno R. Schorer
Charles C. Gibbons
Preston S. Parish

C. M. Benson, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer

THE STAFF OF THE INSTITUTE

Harold C. Taylor, Ph.D.
Director
Kalamazoo

Herbert E. Striner, Ph.D.
Director of Program Development
Washington

Kalamazoo Office

Samuel V. Bennett, M.A.	Harold T. Smith, Ph.D.
Eugene C. McKean, B.A.	Henry C. Thole, M.A.

Washington Office

A. Harvey Belitsky, Ph.D.	Garth L. Mangum, Ph.D.
Henry E. Holmquist, M.A.	J. E. Morton, Ph.D.
Frazier Kellogg, M.A.	Merrill G. Murray, Ph.D.
Sar A. Levitan, Ph.D.	Harold L. Sheppard, Ph.D.
Paul J. Mackin, M.A.	Irving H. Siegel, Ph.D.

THE W. E. UPJOHN INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

The Institute, a privately sponsored nonprofit research organization, was established on July 1, 1945. It is an activity of the W. E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation, which was formed in 1932 to administer a fund set aside by the late Dr. W. E. Upjohn for the purpose of carrying on "research into the causes and effects of unemployment and measures for the alleviation of unemployment."

Copies of this report may be obtained without charge from the Institute in Kalamazoo or from the Washington office, 1101 Seventeenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20036.

PREFACE

The purpose of this report is to help the people of Kalamazoo County understand why so many children are passing through our schools without acquiring the basic subject matter and the traits of character and personality needed to make a living and to contribute to the well-being of our social order. The report is made with the belief that the best remedy, and in many cases the only remedy, lies in prevention; and that, by and large, prevention needs to take place in a child's early years. The schools understand this very well; but with public understanding and support, they can do a great deal more than they have been able to do up to the present time.

The author wishes to express his deep appreciation to the many school administrators and teachers and others for the many hours given in consultation and conference. He is particularly grateful to those who reviewed preliminary drafts of the report: their counsel, criticisms, and suggestions were most helpful.

The conclusions embodied in the report are, of course, those of the author; the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Harold T. Smith

Kalamazoo, Michigan
July 1966

ROLE OF THE ELEMENTARY GRADES IN DEVELOPING THE POTENTIALS
OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN: KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN

In a companion report, entitled Occupational Education Needs in Kalamazoo County, Michigan,¹ reference was made to those young people who are so conditioned against school that they become potential or actual school dropouts. Some of the high schools are introducing remedial programs for these students, but they need help long before they reach high school. Perhaps in most cases, remedial and preventive measures should be undertaken as soon as the child enters school; indeed, in many cases, they should be extended to the home before he reaches school age.

This report deals with the efforts being made in the elementary grades, kindergarten, and preschool to help children who are disadvantaged for any reason. Like its companion report, it is based primarily on conferences with elementary school teachers and administrators, centered around the question: How able are the elementary schools to prepare their pupils for what they must do next?

Continuous Growth Concept

It was pointed out almost immediately, particularly by those working in the early grades, that teachers are not preparing students directly for what they must do next, but rather, they are training them to do well what they are doing at the moment. The goal is not to bring everyone up to some established standard of subject matter performance, but to encourage each child to push ahead according to his individual ability in a pattern of continuous growth. Achievement is the product of ability and application, and the object of the school is to supply the environment and the guidance necessary to enable each child to develop to his optimum rather than to some common level of performance. Since ability and application differ among

¹Harold T. Smith and Henry C. Thole (Kalamazoo, Michigan: The Institute, July 1966), 49 pp.

individuals, the result is diversity rather than uniformity of achievement. Indeed, good teaching tends to magnify variation in achievement.

Except to note that the elementary schools of Kalamazoo County vary rather widely in their implementation of the educational philosophy of continuous growth, no appraisal has been made of how good a job the individual schools are doing in helping each and every child achieve his optimum development. That would be clearly beyond the scope of this report. This report is concerned with the nonachievers at the bottom of the scale--those individuals who, after spending their childhood in school, may still be unable to take a satisfactory place in our socioeconomic society. Knowledge of certain minimum basic subject matter is essential to most employment and needs to be acquired if an individual is to become truly employable.

Of course, the acquirement of subject matter is essential for progress in school. One conferee stated: "In any teaching act, teachers build on and utilize past learnings, expand and apply them, and prepare in effect for that which follows." The individual child's interest comes out of satisfaction in doing well the task in hand. If he cannot or does not do well the task of the moment, his zeal for undertaking the next task is likely to lag, and he may be launching on the road toward becoming a potential dropout.

This appears to be the key to the dropout problem: to detect the child in difficulty at the time the difficulty starts and to help him overcome or circumvent that difficulty early, instead of allowing him to become demoralized and defeated.

In spite of the newer educational philosophy of continuous growth, the schools are heavily influenced by the traditional organization by grades and schools and the physical facilities built in accord with that organization. Therefore, the elementary school system from which so many inadequately prepared students have been moving on into junior and senior high school has been operating about as follows. Because the number of children is not only large but increasing rapidly, the school system must necessarily provide a large, well-organized and continuous operation. It would break down completely if it did not. Organizationally, it has been a graded system with 30, more or less, children in one room for a year with one teacher. Since

growth in population exerts an upward pressure on the number in a class, the rooms are nearly always full or crowded. The kindergarten differs from the grades in that one teacher has two classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, so that she has 60 children, instead of 30, more or less, to teach and guide.

Under the foregoing conditions, the teacher is faced constantly with the problem of where to focus her attention. At one extreme are the aggressively brilliant and the victims of too permissive an upbringing. At the other extreme are the overwhelmed who, for various reasons, seek shelter in withdrawal within themselves. In between are most of the children who need guidance and encouragement in their individual efforts. The teacher cannot neglect the first group and maintain any kind of school atmosphere. Nor can she neglect the class as a whole lest the number of children in trouble become larger instead of smaller and the morale of her entire class break down. As a result, the child in trouble may not get adequate attention when it is needed; he therefore may fail to do the job in hand and fail to become prepared for the next undertaking.

The system sanctions the retention of a certain number of these children in kindergarten or the first grade a second year (three years for two grades), but not more than that because being too much older physically and socially than classmates may become in itself a cause of dissatisfaction with school. Except to allow time for an immature child to develop, there is nothing remedial in retention. Furthermore, those retained over a second year are simply added to those needing special help who enter with the new class, so that a teacher's problem is compounded. In fact, there may not even be space in her classroom for the extra number. The progression of students must be kept moving or the system becomes clogged, and salvaging the individual child in trouble may necessarily become a secondary consideration. The schools must be organized and geared to student success so that the student can experience the satisfaction of significant achievement and the attainment of a worthy self-concept and self-image, for such is basic to learning. The focus is necessarily on uniqueness within the context of the general age group rather than on the "deviate" or the "impaired." The

latter should receive "conscious and sympathetic concern and attention," but he cannot be the main focus from which to operate. One does not question the general truth of this statement, but in the latter part of it lies the basis for allowing the child in trouble to experience failure instead of success and thereby to acquire a poor self-image and ultimately to be defeated.

The foregoing is a statement, far too simple, of the system that has operated in the past and is still operating to a large extent. Teachers and administrators are fully aware of the situation. Indeed, it is through their efforts that changes have been taking place, and they are likely to carry change as far as public understanding and support will permit. Society must spend such time on the child in trouble as necessary to bring his achievements up to the place where he may possess the necessary abilities to make a living, or must take care of him for the rest of his life.

The continuous growth concept of education is bringing about a number of changes. A few of them are noted. In only a few of the upper elementary grades in the county is the letter-grading system still used. It has been largely replaced by the narrative report system and teacher-parent conferences. The idea of the change was to report the child's progress in terms of his own ability rather than in terms of the progress of others, hoping to stimulate all children to do their best and at the same time to provide the slow starter with a sense of achievement instead of conditioning him to the idea that he cannot achieve. Beyond temporary encouragement, there is nothing innately preventive or remedial in the change of grading system. That is still left to the person-to-person contact between teacher and child. Perhaps the chief gain from discarding the letter-grading system is the discarding of its corollary that a certain percent of the students should receive each grade from A through F. The system is, or was, a device for determining in advance the percentage of failures; it helped to prevent the failure of "too many" or "too few," and it served as a "coverup" for the inadequacies of the school system and weaknesses in teaching.

Associated with the letter system of grading is the track system, still used in some of the upper grades and high schools of the county. Under the

system, a grade is divided into two classes according to some arbitrary measure of student abilities or achievements in relation to subject matter content. Again, there is nothing preventive or remedial in the system except as individual teachers can bring it about with individual students. In practice, moving from the lower track to the upper track tends to become more and more rare as the student moves from the early grades to the higher grades. The result may be that those students in the upper track are stimulated because they are there and those in the lower track suffer even greater defeat for being where they are.

A number of individual teachers and groups of teachers in the lower elementary grades of the county are conducting from two to four levels of instruction in their grades. This is done particularly in reading because reading is basic to all other learning. The level system is intended to differ from the track system in that the object is to provide each child reading material fitted to his needs and interests and to make it possible for him to progress at his own rate. Under this system the child is free to move from one level to another at any time on an individual basis. The system calls for very close contact between the teacher and the child.

Each classroom must be equipped with reading material at several levels. This is particularly true in the higher grades. The materials should not be altogether those borrowed from an earlier grade. A child of fifth-grade age who reads at third-grade level, for example, will not be satisfied with third-grade subject matter. In spite of his inability to read at the fifth-grade level, he will want to read about subject matter that he, as an older child, is physically and emotionally ready for. Where this system is carried out adequately, there must be a duplication of levels in the various rooms, for each room will have children of normal age reading at perhaps all grade levels from grade one up.

One of the main advantages of the level system is that it has a close teacher-student relationship built into it, and preventive and remedial elements are more necessarily a part of it. The problems in applying it arise out of the traditional school system; it is still necessary that the child be promoted (or not promoted) from one grade to another at the end of

the year. This is not so unfortunate when the level system prevails in the next grade, but the level system usually has ceased to exist at the end of the third grade; indeed, no case was reported where levels prevailed beyond the sixth grade. There comes a time when the students at all levels are quite generally brought together, or the levels have degenerated into tracks.

There are a few places in the county where the attempt is being made to obliterate the sharp line between one grade and the next. One group of early elementary teachers, for example, located in a building somewhat adapted to the program, is endeavoring to make it possible for each child to move at his own rate through the first three grades, advancing at any time from one step to the next in any area. This is undoubtedly an improvement over having levels specifically within grades. But again, the success of the program rests on the direct teacher-student relationship. It is hoped that during the years the child may be in this system he will have responded sufficiently so that he can take his place in the later elementary grades with reasonable success. It would be even better, of course, if the program were carried on through all of the elementary grades, and surely beyond the third grade. There is no sound educational reason for not doing so, but existing school organization and fixed physical facilities, particularly at the point when the child must move from one building to another, create problems that are difficult to overcome or circumvent. The essential point, however, is that, whatever type of physical organization may necessarily exist, a close teacher-child relationship must be achieved.

According to the teachers, how close the relationship between the teacher and the student can be is influenced heavily by the size of the class. The early elementary teachers frequently pointed out that they can conduct levels successfully within grades with 25 or fewer students in a class, but when the number goes up to 30 and beyond, the system tends to break down. Many of the later elementary teachers interviewed reported that if they could have no more than 25 students in a class, they could teach most children not having learned to read adequately to do so where the cause is not biological or organic. But as the size of the class increases, the

chance of giving the child in trouble the time he needs diminishes, and as the enrollment reaches 30 and beyond, time for the child in trouble tends to disappear. The universal complaint of the teacher is that she has not time to do what she believes she could do.

Some administrators, perhaps the majority of them, take exception to this. They have seen too many cases where teachers with large classes have done excellent teaching and other cases where teachers with small classes have not done so well. Furthermore, they cite research indicating that class size does not seem to be very important to the quality of teaching done.

The concern here is not how well the teacher succeeds with her total group of students in a statistical sense, but how well she deals with that portion of her students who are in trouble. It is doubtful whether any research has been conducted showing that the teacher's ability to give time to the children in trouble when it is needed is not affected by the size of her class.

In arguing that class size is a factor in determining the amount of time the teacher can spend with the child in trouble, it is not intended to suggest that more time, in itself, is a remedy. Rather, it is what the teacher is able to do with the time that matters. Furthermore, there may be other ways of providing more teacher time for the child in trouble than by reducing the size of her class; for example, providing her with trained assistants.

Preventive and Remedial Programs

Important steps are being taken at the kindergarten and early grade levels and even at the preschool level to help children experience success in school. This effort, of course, varies widely from school to school, and except for an occasional teacher or group of teachers, effective change has not yet taken place in the upper elementary grades or in junior high school. Several times in the conferences with junior high school personnel it was noted that counselors are frequently unable to suggest to older potential dropouts some courses that hopefully might interest them, primarily

industrial arts courses, because these courses are not always available in junior high school. In such cases, students must remain entirely in the conventional academic program until they can be moved into the tenth grade of senior high school. This is not as true in some junior high schools as in others.

Some teachers questioned the soundness of the junior high school organization, whereby the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades are set apart in a separate building with classes conducted on a departmental basis so that each child has a different teacher for each class. It is reported that a relatively large number of seventh grade children are referred for psychological diagnostic and clinical services. It was suggested by a few teachers that these referrals may be children who reach their capacity at about that time. But it is doubtful whether human capacity is that quantitative and comes to complete fullness, like a gallon jug, at a particular time. Human capacity is surely qualitative.

In discussing the rash of referrals from the seventh grade, one psychologist suggested that some children who have found direction and security in their individual teachers in the earlier grades are not ready for the freedom and responsibilities that come in the departmental organization of junior high school. With a different teacher for each subject, with the loss of identification with a single teacher, and with the new responsibilities for managing their own time and study, some of these children break down. Whether this means that the freedoms and responsibilities inherent in the departmental organization of the junior high school come too early or unnecessarily early for the majority of students is a separate question. Nevertheless, the junior high organization appears to pose a special problem for children in trouble or on the verge of trouble.

The causes of an emotional block against school and its learning processes are many and varied. Many of the causes in the beginning lie in the physical makeup of the child. Some causes lie in the social and cultural fabric of home and community. Still others develop along the way simply because growing up is a process of meeting successfully one new situation after another; and sometimes busy or ill-informed parents or an overloaded

or inept teacher may not recognize when a situation has become a crisis, and may not provide at the right time the lift that is essential to carry the child through.

The more obvious physical causes, such as defective eyesight, teeth, or hearing, may be readily observed, or they may be caught in the fall clinics when students are given general physical examinations. Most parents will follow through and have their children fitted with glasses, and to a less extent, fitted with hearing aid equipment. In cases of need, financial aid is available from a number of civic and professional clubs and from the Constance Brown Hearing and Speech Center. Teachers commented repeatedly that dental needs are most often neglected. A child suffering from infected teeth can scarcely be expected to be mentally alert. Without reference to monetary considerations, all corrections, physical or otherwise, require the cooperation of parents.

There are deeper physical causes, such as brain damage, glandular abnormalities, and other organic malconditions of many types and forms that interfere with children's perceptual abilities. These cases are increasing in number because more children with such afflictions are surviving the hazards of birth and infancy. They require highly specialized physical and psychological diagnostic and remedial measures.

Another cause for inability to adjust to school is educational disadvantage arising out of home and community environment. For example, some children may never have heard or seen reading in the home. They may never have been read to. There may never have been literature or even reading material in the home. Some children may never have heard conversation in full sentences or in sentences of any complexity. Their communication may have been with an entirely different vocabulary and pronunciation of words from those used in the schools.

As a matter of survival, many disadvantaged children may have become conditioned not to hear what is going on about them or not to respond or not to respond truthfully in order to "stay out of trouble."

The conferences revealed that some of the most difficult children to help are not those who are physically or emotionally sick in any way, but

rather those who are thoroughly conditioned and adjusted to their own separate worlds. They are not interested in the larger world and see no reason to enter it. To motivate them to do so is extremely difficult. Every district in Kalamazoo County has some such children, but as is well recognized, there are a variety of forces working to gather the disadvantaged into areas of concentration, which in itself is conducive to further disadvantage.

Whatever the original causes of disadvantage, the effects are cumulative and become causes in themselves. For example, the failure to learn to read, one of the early results, soon becomes a major cause for further failure; continuous failure results in an emotional block against learning, which itself becomes a cause. By the time an individual has reached high school, the gap between what he knows and what he needs to know in order to prepare for something he might do in the world of work has become wide and deep, and the emotional block against school is very strong. These are conditions with which the schools and society must grapple if disadvantaged children are to participate fully in the school program and finally in the conventional society.

Since preparation of a child for the future is teaching him to do well the job in hand and to enjoy doing it, it is not too difficult for the perceptive teacher to spot the child in trouble. He is the child who is not doing each daily task well and therefore not being stimulated by a sense of achievement. This is not to say that the kindergarten and early elementary teachers believe they can always spot those who will eventually become dropouts. On the contrary, they know that many children will and do overcome or circumvent their early handicaps. It is those who fail to overcome their early handicaps or fail to cope with new problems as they occur along the way who become the potential dropouts. Except as teachers all the way through the grades recognize the child in trouble and take immediate steps to help him overcome his trouble, he may be in for serious future difficulty. This emphasizes again the importance of teacher attention to each child at the time it is needed.

Staff Specialists and Special Services

During recent years, certain specialists have been added to the school staffs to help with those students not able to cope with school work. Some

of these specialists are on the staff of the intermediate school district and some are on the staffs of the constituent school districts. They are all financed by the state or federal government, and the funds are made available through the intermediate school district. Those on the staff of the intermediate school district serve schools that do not have staff specialists while those on the staffs of individual districts, of course, serve their respective districts. The city districts have specialists such as diagnosticians, reading specialists, speech therapists, school nurses, visiting teachers, consultants for the visually, physically, and emotionally handicapped, guidance counselors, and special education teachers.

During 1965-66, the Kalamazoo Valley Intermediate School District supplied the following: one coordinator of special education (education for low achievers), in addition to the salaries for all special education teachers; one elementary education and reading consultant; one coordinator and three and a half teachers of educational programs for delinquent and neglected children; three visiting teachers (school social workers); one consultant (and one vacancy) to the physically handicapped in elementary grades; one diagnostician (two vacancies), school psychological examiners trained to give psychological measurements to determine whether a child is mentally retarded; one consultant for mentally handicapped; one part-time (one day a week) psychologist; and one and a half teachers of the home-bound and hospitalized.

Under the terms according to which these special staff personnel are made available in a school district, they must be shared with the nonpublic schools located in the district. Sharing is on the basis of school enrollments. Since the nonpublic schools are located in the city districts, they share in the services of the specialists where the load is already heaviest. But the proportion of children in trouble in the nonpublic schools is less than the proportion in trouble in the public schools in the same areas. There are two reasons for this. The nonpublic schools, by virtue of their clientele's having a common socioeconomic philosophy and the ability to pay tuition, have a select body of students, which the public schools do not have. And, the children who fall behind in the nonpublic schools can and

do quite generally drop out into the public schools. Also, the situation varies somewhat among the nonpublic schools. Those schools that serve more exclusively their own clientele and seldom if ever waive tuition charges have relatively fewer children who need specialized services than do those schools that reach out to children beyond their clientele and even waive tuition charges in order to keep children in school.

The teachers throughout the county have no criticism of the quality of the specialists, but they feel strongly that there are entirely too few of them. Too often specialists can do little more than scratch the surface. There are extreme cases where specialists are allowed a half-day a month for the elementary grades of a single school. It frequently happens that they can do no more than counsel with the teachers or work with a few individual children. Here the choice may be whether to work with a fair number of the more teachable cases, or to work with a fewer number of the more difficult cases.

Schools look to the Kalamazoo Child Guidance Clinic, Western Michigan University Psychological Clinic, and, of course, professional clinical psychologists for special help. The schools speak highly of the quality of the services performed by all of these agencies and professionals, but there are not nearly enough such services available to meet the actual need. The Child Guidance Clinic endeavors to provide an examination interview within a month after a referral, but referrals generally must wait four to five months for treatment (a much shorter time than prevailed only a few years ago). There is also a waiting list for entering Western Michigan University Psychological Clinic, even for speech therapy. It is most unfortunate that any child, much less large numbers of them, should have to wait for such services. In the meantime, they may be suffering defeat in school and acquiring a dislike for school.

Whenever possible, the school prefers that children's troubles be treated in the school environment so that children may come to think of the school as a place where help is given. In referring a child to a psychological clinic, for example, the teacher loses touch with him. The whole matter becomes a relationship between the clinic and the child's parents,

and the information acquired by the clinic is naturally classified as professional information and may not be directly available to the teacher. Reports are made to the schools through the visiting nurse, who interprets the reports to the teachers. This system of communication is quite logical, but it does not always work out to the satisfaction of the teacher or to the best interests of the child. Referrals may be slow in getting through school channels from the teacher to the clinic. They are most numerous at three times during the year--after the opening of school in the fall, after the close of the first semester in the winter, and after the close of the second semester in early summer. These concentrations of referrals may result in a breakdown of communications and an unfortunate delay in getting important information back to the teachers. For example, reports of treatment of children referred at the end of the school year may never reach the right teacher, for when school opens in the fall, the children will have moved on to other grades and other teachers. Because of this and the lag in time, the use made of the reports may be somewhat impaired.

The Child Guidance Clinic is willing to hold a personal interview with any teacher concerning a child referred to it. But this would require that the teacher have time off from school for the interview, and thereby create a very great problem for the schools. Furthermore, if such a practice were pursued throughout the five counties served by the clinic, the load of interviews on the clinic would be very heavy indeed.

That there is a great shortage of clinical psychology facilities for school children is most apparent. In fact, the long waiting period undoubtedly causes many who need the service not to receive it at all: the schools may become discouraged from making referrals, parents may not carry through, and the treatment may never be applied or completed.

But even so, no amount of clinical services would relieve the schools from the large amount of time they need to give to children in trouble. In fact, an increase in such services most likely would increase awareness of the need for special attention, for much treatment involves adjusting to a problem and learning how to live with it or circumvent it over a considerable

period of time. Drugs and surgery may help, but the remedy is a relearning process in which the schools, as well as the parents, must have a part. When there is taken into account the number of children who attend school under physical, psychological, social, and environmental handicaps, of whom only a few are likely to be clinical cases, the need for close attention to individual children in the elementary grades becomes clear.

Pilot Programs

The proportion of children entering school under handicap varies from district to district and from school to school. Those disadvantaged by physical and emotional causes are present in all schools. The emotional causes, however, may have had their origin in quite different environments and under very different social and family circumstances.

All schools have some educationally disadvantaged children, but some districts have more of them proportionately than others. For economic, social, and ethnic reasons, abetted by housing and zoning regulations and other circumstances, the educationally disadvantaged tend not only to drift into cities but to become concentrated in certain areas. This creates some knotty problems that belong to society as a whole. But in such a situation, it is felt that it is a great advantage in salvaging the educationally disadvantaged children if they, and their parents too, can be reached before these children are of school age. It is this conviction that has given impetus to the preschool as a device for reaching the educationally disadvantaged children at an early age and to the community school as a device for reaching parents.

Preschool and Head Start Classes. The preschool in itself is not a new idea. Nonpublic preschools or nursery schools for children of those who are willing and able to pay tuition have been in operation for a long time, and some of the public schools have operated preschools in the summer and even during the regular school year as an accommodation to parents. None of these nursery schools are intended to reach the educationally disadvantaged. In general, children are admitted in the order of application, and they are all charged tuition. Any child admitted who proves unable to fit into the

program will be asked to withdraw. The children are not necessarily of the same economic or social environment, but they are not the educationally disadvantaged. These nursery schools are providing a service that many, many children should have, but one of their effects is to widen the gap between the educationally advantaged and the educationally disadvantaged who come together in kindergarten.

The first real use of the preschool as an instrument geared strictly to the needs of the educationally disadvantaged in Kalamazoo County came about in the fall of 1963. It was the brainchild of an inspired citizen, although enthusiastically supported by others including the Kalamazoo school administration. The preschool and its follower, the federally sponsored Head Start program, are described in considerable detail because they appear to have much to suggest concerning treatment of the educationally disadvantaged.

The first such class of 15 four-year-old children was held in a house donated to the Kalamazoo Public Schools for the purpose. The next year, 1964-65, three classes of approximately 15 students each were conducted. The operating funds for these classes were provided by a local foundation, and the program was administered by the Kalamazoo Public Schools.

In the spring of 1965, the Head Start program came into being as a part of the federal antipoverty program. As a result, during seven weeks of the summer of 1965, 14 classes were offered in the Kalamazoo district alone for 222 prekindergarten children (an average of 16 per class) at 8 different schools. The staff included 43 paid professionals and nonprofessionals (1 to every 5 children) and 36 volunteers (1 to every 6 children). The classes were operated throughout both mornings and afternoons, as were the preschool classes of the two preceding years. The program was designed to recognize the needs of individual children and to prepare them for successful kindergarten membership in the fall.

During the summer of 1965, the Portage school district operated two Head Start preschool classes of 14 children each, and the Comstock district operated one class of 15 children. The staffs at Portage and Comstock were comparable to the staff in Kalamazoo. In Portage, for example, the staff

consisted of two head teachers, two aides, an office aide, a staff director, and a director. The teachers were qualified Portage school teachers, one with kindergarten experience and the other with first grade background. The aides assisted the teachers in group work and in helping individual children who needed extra attention. Each mother whose child was accepted agreed to help as a volunteer aide several times during the seven weeks. Different mothers came each day to help the teachers so that there were always three adults, often four or five, working with 14 children. Two diagnosticians were assigned to work with the staff.

The involvement of parents, particularly mothers, is considered one of the essential ingredients in the program, perhaps not so much for their help as for what they may learn as parents. In one staff director's report, this involvement is described in detail. Mothers assisted in the daily program by helping with painting, by reading stories to small groups of children, and by helping at snack time. They went along on the enrichment trips. They were present when the physical examinations were made. At weekly meetings with mothers problems were discussed. One evening meeting was held for parents; 30 fathers and mothers attended and heard a discussion by a member of the staff of the Child Guidance Clinic.

The selection of the students to be taken into a preschool program is, of course, of great importance. In all three districts having a Head Start program in the summer of 1965, the selections were made somewhat as follows. Basic criteria were first established. Nominations based on the criteria were solicited from school principals; kindergarten and elementary teachers; the school nurse and visiting teachers; the County Health Department; the Bureau of Social Aid or other social agencies and social workers; ministers; the Juvenile Courts; the Police Department; and qualified individuals peculiar to the community. In one district, and perhaps in the others, requests by parents were added to the list. Visits to the homes of those nominated were made by visiting teachers or some other specially qualified community school worker. From the nominations and the information secured from all sources, a limited number of children were invited and urged to enter the program--taking into consideration the \$3,000 family income limitation

established by the antipoverty program and an equitable distribution among schools in a district where more than one school was involved. Apparently there was very little difficulty in persuading parents to enter their children, except where special problems, for example, transportation problems, intervened.

During the school year 1965-66, the Kalamazoo Public Schools operated seven full-day preschool classes for 105 children, an average of 15 to a class. There was a staff of 20 (1 for every 5 children). The operating funds were provided in part through the Community Action Committee of the Office of Economic Opportunity and in part by a local foundation.

The Office of Economic Opportunity has allocated \$50,954 for Head Start programs in the nine school districts of Kalamazoo County for the summer of 1966. Funds allocated to the smaller districts are not sufficient to cover the cost of a class in each, but they have enabled two or more districts to cooperate in offering joint classes.

The preschool and Head Start programs have been received with a great deal of enthusiasm. The important ingredients appear to be: not more than 15 or 16 children in a class, a dedicated staff of three paid professionals and nonprofessionals plus two or more volunteers; a workable system for selecting the children who most need the program and can make use of it; and the involvement of parents in the program. Perhaps to these should be added frequent visits to the children's homes.

The schools are cautious about appraising the actual results of the Head Start programs and the preschools for educationally disadvantaged children at this early stage. All of those having a part in the program, however, appear to be enthusiastic about it. All of the kindergarten and elementary teachers and administrators interviewed in the county, except one, estimated roughly and quite off the cuff that from 20 to 30 percent of the children entering kindergarten in the fall of 1965 could have profited by such a program. One kindergarten teacher thought that no more than 3 of her class of 25 could have profited from preschool. It developed, however, that, beginning in the fall of 1965, her district discontinued taking into kindergarten children who have not become five years of age by August 31.

This gave her two advantages for the year 1965-66. One was that a disproportionate share of the immature whom she normally would have had were eliminated, and the other was that it gave her a smaller class than she otherwise would have had. It would be interesting to follow this smaller class up through the grades and high school to see whether its percentage of potential dropouts remains less than in preceding classes or classes that follow.

It would be interesting also to follow the children who are being held out a year by the August 31 cutoff date to see how they are affected. Two negative features may result from keeping these children out of kindergarten for a year. One is that those disadvantaged because of home and community influence and environment may become all the more disadvantaged for having been confined to the home for an additional year. The other is that some of those excluded will be the more precocious who ought not suffer the loss of a year's time.

It appears that an evaluation of the Head Start and preschool programs designed for the educationally disadvantaged should be made right away; that the results should be measured in kindergarten and first grade as well as in later years. In later years, the failures could be more the failures of the grades that follow than of the preschool training itself. A child may move a long way in a small group in an all-day preschool program under the guidance of a relatively large and skilled staff, and later may collapse in a half-day kindergarten under one teacher with two large classes a day, or in a large first grade class under one teacher. Immediate results do not always persist over time; nor do special programs and emphases always provide long-time results.

The permanence of the effects of the preschool and Head Start programs upon children cannot now be determined. But certainly, the smaller classes and the larger staffs make possible a close and effective teacher-student relationship.

Community schools. These schools, operated in several districts, are designed to meet the needs and desires of people. They may be used to help reach educationally disadvantaged parents. The following is an account of

one such attempt now underway, of which there have been several. A supreme effort is made to get adults involved through their children's programs. Contact with the parents is made direct and personal by an extensive use of telephone calls and personal visitations and by talks before church and other groups. Adult programs and children's programs are run at the same time. Programs are provided for senior citizens; there are family nights, story hours, swimming programs, sewing programs, parents conferences (where suggestions are made for home activities), and mothers' afternoon out (a summer program). Some additional efforts designed to help build self-concepts and supplement the home are: a study hall, physical fitness activities, a reading class for adults, and a tutorial program (in which Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College students work on a one-to-one basis with the children).

During the past school year, a breakfast experiment was conducted at the same school for the benefit of children and their parents. School counselors and nurses provided the names of 200 children thought not to be getting an adequate diet at home. The children were of all ages from preschool through the sixth grade. They were divided into groups of about 30, and one group at a time was served breakfast five days a week for four weeks. A very essential requirement was that mothers come and eat with the children one day a week. This project, like all such projects, called for a lot of work. For example, during the early four-week periods three home calls per child were found to be necessary in order to involve the parents to the extent desired. Those operating the program would like to defer drawing conclusions until a later time. It is reported, however, that the children in the early groups gained 2 to 12 pounds each, averaging 4 to 5 pounds during the four weeks, and that some of them showed marked improvement in their school work. It is felt that the effect on the children was very much worth while and that the attitude of children and parents toward school improved. And, of course, it is hoped that the effect on the home may have been significant. The school would like to repeat the program next year, and increase the breakfast period from four weeks to eight weeks.

Special reading programs. Federal funds are available for the employment

of special reading teachers for remedial purposes. A few such teachers have been employed in the schools of Kalamazoo County, and more are expected to be employed in 1966-67. Since they are remedial teachers by federal requirement, their services are not made available to children below the fourth grade: they are available to children in the fourth grade and up.

Until last year, the services of these teachers were confined to certain pilot schools where the need was felt to be particularly great. Last year, however, their services were extended to all of the public schools along with the nonpublic schools. In nonpilot schools, however, remedial reading has been spread very thin, amounting in some schools to only four or five hours a week. The services of the remedial reading teachers, therefore, like the services of most of the specialists, have thus far been spread too thin to make much of an impression on the total situation. The efforts need to become the concern of the entire school system and to be made preventive as well as remedial; otherwise, not enough will have been accomplished.

Teaching the fourth grade nonreader to read is not a simple matter. Perceptual problems and problems relating to attitudes toward school and learning may need to be solved before much can be accomplished. Causes need to be diagnosed in order to know why the child has not learned to read. Only then can a sound method of teaching him to read be designed. Without such diagnosis, the remedial reading lessons may consist of further drilling in methods and procedures in which the child has repeatedly experienced defeat.

It is suggested that teacher training institutions are just on the threshold of learning how to teach reading. In the very beginning, the child's limitations and abilities need to be assessed and the way of teaching him must be tailored to his particular abilities and problems. There are a number of ways, and perhaps many variations of ways, of teaching reading, several of which likely should be used in each classroom. It is a mistake to go all-out for one method of teaching reading, to the exclusion of all others, which in America we are so prone to do.

A significant pilot effort in one school, known as the Reading Center, is described here as an example of what can be undertaken. The stated

purpose of the Center is to develop ways and means by which children may attain their maximum reading ability and to assist all children in this school in achieving such ability. The program was planned during the school year 1964-65; and during the summer of 1965, a special guide for the use of teachers of reading in educationally disadvantaged areas was prepared and made available for use in the fall.

At the beginning of the school year 1965, an informal inventory was made of the 300 children in grades four, five, and six in this school to determine the reading level of each child. The object was to make it possible to match materials with each child's level of reading. The inventory disclosed that one-third of the children were reading at second grade level or below. Based on the inventory results, books of appropriate levels were selected. Such multi-ethnic books as are available were secured; low-vocabulary, high-interest books were recommended for children at very low reading levels; and experience stories dictated by the children themselves were introduced to retarded reading groups, so that the children could have stories of their own experiences to read in their own language patterns.

The average size of classes in this school is only 23, which may be of considerable significance. A reading specialist spends three days a week working with approximately 30 children (not always the same 30) on a one-to-one basis. She spends the other two days with the teachers. This involves seeing that teachers have the right kind of materials, working with children in groups, working with teachers in groups, and helping teachers in the technique of teaching reading.

In addition to a reading specialist, the school has a resource teacher, variously called in other schools an emergency building teacher or a skills teacher, who is available on call to help in any room when needed. She can stay in a classroom an hour, a day, a week, or longer as necessary.

Some team teaching was used in launching the Reading Center. But when asked if team teaching on a more permanent basis might be desirable, the interviewees expressed the belief, or perhaps the hope, that with no more than 23 children in a class, with the help of the reading specialist and the resource teacher, and with better classroom teaching of reading, the teaching

force will prove to be adequate. It was felt, however, that the entire program could be materially strengthened by a more complete adoption of the continuous growth philosophy and, finally, by the obliteration of lines between grades throughout the school.

All children in this school came to have reading twice daily, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Some services were extended to the third grade this past year, and next year the main efforts may be centered in grades three, four, and five instead of four, five, and six. In fact, some services may be extended to grade two.

It is too soon to appraise the ultimate effectiveness of the Reading Center. Those operating it are enthusiastic about the immediate results, as it seems they should be. The advancement of the program into the early grades should be continued until the program becomes fully preventive as well as remedial.

If the flow of potential dropouts into junior high school is to be reduced materially, such a preventive and remedial program should permeate the entire elementary school system.

Conclusions

The flow of potential dropouts through the elementary grades into high school can be materially reduced. Few realize this more than school administrators and teachers. And they know about all that is now known of ways and means for helping disadvantaged children overcome their disadvantages.

The organizational ingredients that promise to be most helpful are various combinations of smaller classes, team teaching, resource or emergency building teachers subject to call, a fuller use of specialists, and a greater use of the continuous growth organization in lieu of the conventional organization by grade. A greater shift to the continuous growth philosophy of teaching is certain to bring about its own style of group teaching; in fact, it could scarcely come about without doing so.

Teaching by teams made up of professional teachers, nonprofessionals, and even volunteers has been accepted in the Head Start and preschool programs

for educationally disadvantaged children; in all probability, the system should be extended rather substantially to kindergartens and first grades, particularly where the number of children is large. The later elementary teachers, however, do not look with enthusiasm upon teaching teams that include nonprofessional help of any kind. They favor having resource teachers or emergency building teachers available on call to help out in a classroom when needed.

It is recognized that classes cannot always be as small throughout the elementary grades as teachers would like because the number and size of classrooms in existing buildings are already fixed, and these facilities must accommodate the ever-growing number of children. Where the number of disadvantaged children is large, however, small classes should be considered essential and somehow managed.

It behooves the schools to find ways and means for all teachers to have more time for children in trouble when they need it. The missing, motivating force is public understanding and the public will to have the job done, abetted by the necessary financial support.